

Koggiung, Alaska. September. 9, 1919.

Commissioner of Fisheries,

The following report of salmon canning operations on the Kvichak, Naknek, Egagik and Ugashik rivers for the season of 1919, is herewith submitted.

Warden, Alaska Fisheries Service.

Arrival of ships.

Bristol bay in the region of the Kvichak, Naknek, Egagik and Ugashik rivers was free of ice by the first of May. Five days later the Alaska Packers' ship Star of Zeland dropped anchor in the bay, closely followed by the Centennial of the same company, until by the middle of the month practically the entire salmon fleet lay at anchor.

Canning preparations.

Calm weather prevailed the earlier part of the season and the landing of supplies was accomplished without loss or delay.

Can making was started as soon as supplies could be lightered ashore and all canneries had completed preparations for a big run of fish by the twentieth of June.

Opening of season.

The Northwestern Fisheries Co. at Naknek was the first to send out its fishermen, their fishing boats leaving the cannery the nineteenth of June. On the twentieth day of June the Naknek Packing Co. and the Red Salmon Canning Co. both of Naknek sent out their boats. By June the twenty-fifth the entire fishing fleet was scouring the waters of the bay for salmon

Canning starts.

Canning started June twenty-fourth at some canneries after a light catch of fish on the previous day but all canneries were not in operation until the twenty-sixth.

The Salmon run.

The first fish deliveries to tally scows and canneries were made the twenty-third day of June. The run remained weak until the twenty-seventh day of June on which day most of the canneries packed over a thousand cases. After the storms and winds of the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh the run slackened again and poor catches continued up to July third, on which day the fish began beating into the the rivers before a strong southwest wind.

July fourth was the apex of the season, all canneries packing from two up to five thousand cases of fish. After July fourth the run fell below normal once more and remained at a low level the remainder of the season. Southwest winds brought in small schools of fish occasionally during the run, but raised it in volume very little. Cannerymen entertained no hopes for even an average pack after July fifteenth and most of the fishermen lay at anchor the greater part of the time only fishing during the middle hours of the day, and often not then unless a "Southwester" was blowing.

Not since the commencement of fish canning in Bristol bay has such a poor season been known. In past years failures were experienced in various localities but no such a complete failure was ever known heretofore.

Season closes.

The Lockanok cannery of Libby McNeill & Libby called in its fishermen the twenty-eighth day of July it being the first cannery to cease operations. July twenty-ninth the remaining canneries on the Kvichak, Naknek, Egagik and Ugashik rivers called in their boats with the exception of the Bristol Bay Packing Co. whose boats remained to "scrape" the beaches.

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Pack by Canneries.

The Northwestern Fisheries Co. at Naknek was high cannery for the amount of cases packed per line. Three lines were operated and the average for each line was about twelve thousand cases.

The Naknek Packing Co. at Naknek was a close second while the rest of the canneries fell far behind.

The Lockanok cannery of Libby McNeill & Libby put up the smallest pack of the Libby canneries.

The Portland Packers at Naknek put up the smallest pack of any cannery on the Kvichak, Naknek, Egagik and Ugashik rivers but this was due to the handicap under which they worked as the cannery was not completed at the opening of the season.

The Ugashik cannery of the Alaska Packers was to have operated but it could not be completed through lack of building material caused by the loss of the schooner Premier about two hundred miles inside of Unimak Pass on the Pacific side.

Storms.

Storms were quite frequent throughout the season and in all instances they were accompanied by fish but not in the volume of past seasons.

Outrun of Fry.

Throughout the entire season salmon fry were in evidence pouring out of the Kvichak, Naknek, Egagik and Ugashik rivers by the millions. Flocks of tern and gulls followed in the wake of all steamers and gas boats and took their toll of the myriad hosts stirred up and stunned by the churning propellers.

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Salmon escapement.

While the present season was a small one the escapement of salmon to spawn is believed to be greater than that of last year. This however could hardly be the case as no limit was placed on the catches this year thus the amount of fish escaping would likely be less than if a big run of fish were on and fishermen were only compelled to fish for a few hours to catch the limit. Another argument against the escapement of fish this year being greater than that of last year is the pack of the Lockanok cannery of Libby McNeill & Libby. This year the Lockanok cannery packed but slightly over half the amount packed by the rest of the Kvichak river canneries. In years previous to this the Lockanok fishermen fished almost entirely in the vicinity of the confluence of Branch river with the Kvichak river, but this year the fish were thinned out before they reached Branch river, thus lowering the catch of the Lockanok fishermen and the pack of the cannery.

Set nets.

Set nets were not as numerous this season as they were last season chiefly because of Influenza among the natives. Ninety-one were operated on the Kvichak river between the mouth and the Lockanok cannery. On the Naknek river seventy-three were operated from the mouth to the Portland Packers cannery. The Egagik river had but fifty-nine, it being the lowest of all, while on the Ugashik river eighty-two are known to have been set.

Operators.

The operators of the district were the same as last year with a few exceptions. The Alaska Packers saltery at Ugashik was converted into a cannery while the Portland Packers cannery at Naknek was completed to operate two lines. The Nelson saltery on the Kvichak river was closed down the middle of the season.

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H. Gartelman at Koggiung employed native fishermen and workmen during the latter part of the season and packed fifty-six barrels of salt salmon. The gear and supplies for salting were supplied to Mr. Gartelman by the Alaska Salmon Co. and his pack was turned over to them at the close of the season.

Departure of canneries.

The Northwestern Fisheries Co. of Naknek was first to finish its seasons work and start homeward. Their last boat left Naknek August the eleventh

The Naknek Packing Co. was next, leaving the thirteenth of August.

Libby McNeill & Libby was last to depart. They were detained by a strike of fishermen and seamen until September the seventeenth.

Samuel H. Thingard.
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